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Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7891st meeting

Monday, 27 February 2017, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Yelchenko	(Ukraine)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Arancibia Fernández
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Egypt	Mr. Kandeel
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mrs. Gueguen Mohsen
	Italy	Mr. Lambertini
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Sadykov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Mr. Klein
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2017/95/Rev.1)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2017/95/Rev.1)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Serbia to participate in this meeting.

I request the protocol officer to escort His Excellency Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia, to his seat at the Council table.

Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted to a seat at the Council table.

The President: On behalf of the Security Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Vlora Çitaku to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/95/Rev.1, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

I now give the floor to Mr. Tanin.

Mr. Tanin: Before I begin my remarks on the situation in Kosovo, I would like to convey my profound sadness over the passing of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin of the Russian Federation, and to express my sincere condolences to his wife, his family and the Government of the Russian Federation on having lost one of his country's greatest diplomats. We will miss him in the Council.

As noted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/95/Rev.1), the past few months in Kosovo have been characterized by inconsistent progress as well as heightened tension between Belgrade and Pristina, including a reciprocal series of reactions and counter-reactions, accompanied at times by threatening and bellicose rhetoric. These events and political posturing reduce space for progress within the top-level political dialogue — a process that remains as fragile as it is essential and irreplaceable.

During my recent discussions in Pristina and Belgrade, each side naturally expressed differing perceptions of the reasons behind the reduced quality of communications and relations, and in general accused one another of having engaged in intentional provocations. Pristina leaders perceive various actions and words from Belgrade as being calculated to undermine the objectives of the Pristina Government, particularly as regards its outreach efforts towards the northern Serb-majority municipalities. Belgrade leaders perceive the actions and words of Pristina as attempts to sidestep processes based in the dialogue facilitated by the European Union (EU) and create new realities on the ground.

Irrespective of the divergent perceptions and interpretations, the facts were that a succession of events, detailed in the Secretary-General's report, combined to undermine trust, to inhibit the space for productive dialogue, and to push the situation uncomfortably close to renewed instability and confrontation. I should note that, since the issuance of the report, several other significant developments have taken place, including some more constructive ones.

At the beginning of this month, partially as a response to an escalating situation, Belgrade and Pristina leaders finally met at the highest political level in Brussels, under the auspices of the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. This meeting was an essential step to chart a path out of a deteriorating situation and to publicly reconfirm their commitment to working together. A few days later, after close consultations led by the EU Special Representative and involving various other diplomatic partners, the Mayor of North Mitrovica and the Minister of the Environment and Spatial Planning of Kosovo signed an agreement to remove the wall that had previously been constructed as part of the bridge redevelopment plan near the northern end of the Mitrovica bridge. It was removed without incident

on 5 February, and construction subsequently began on a newly agreed park space plan that addresses the concerns of all stakeholders.

Most recently, Pristina has renewed calls for the transformation of the Kosovo Security Force into the Kosovo armed forces, including through the adoption of a resolution in the Assembly of Kosovo. This initiative remains opposed by the Kosovo Serbs and Belgrade, with reference to resolution 1244 (1999), emphasizing the exclusive role and authorities of the international security presence, the Kosovo Force (KFOR).

In the short term, the effects of the recent stresses in Kosovo still reverberate. Trust and confidence among Kosovo Serbs and Albanians have been affected; they will take time to rebuild. Nonetheless, with the restarting of the top-level dialogue, there are signs that work is again happening towards this goal. Discussing the details involved in implementing the future association/community of Serb-majority municipalities will certainly help the Kosovo Serbs to re-engage with the range of Government activities from which they have unfortunately removed themselves over the past three months. As seen in the past, one-sided approaches or steps aimed at resolving issues that affect both sides, and indeed overall progress in the normalization process, are more likely to lead to confrontation than to positive results in the direction desired by those who contemplate such steps.

There is no alternative to dialogue. The international prescriptions set forth to Pristina and Belgrade are categorical imperatives: non-confrontation, resolving issues through dialogue, and placing the objective improvement of the lives of people ahead of more limited and parochial calculations. I hope that the Council will help to hold leaders to their words that they will maintain a sincere and consistent commitment to dialogue and the full implementation of all the agreements already reached, and avoid making statements or undertaking activities that undermine its potential and put at risk all the benefits it is designed to bring to the population: security, prosperity and peace.

Kosovo's institutions continue to face daunting challenges to delivering as their leaders might wish. Political infighting persists. Disputes between the Government and opposition remain acrimonious. Disputes between the governing parties are also visible, as is dissent within governing parties. Major stakeholders feel pressure to position themselves for the electoral cycles, too often at the expense of time and energy that can be devoted to governance. Belgrade is also engaged in a political campaign surrounding the presidential elections in April. It is paramount to ensure that electoral politics do not disrupt vital processes and the kind of progress that is built up only with sustained time and effort, beyond the fluctuations of political seasons. The normalization of relations, reconciliation and justice all belong to that broader horizon.

Success in the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina is interlinked with long-term and sustainable societal reconciliation among Kosovo's communities. Courageous leadership and positive actions are important to promoting changes in attitudes. We recognize and appreciate a number of significant steps taken by some leaders, and encourage more sustained efforts to move beyond the past and to focus on the future.

Along with all my international colleagues in Kosovo, I took careful note of the recently announced initiative to explore the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission as one additional mechanism to open internal dialogue between the communities in Kosovo. Any such initiative should be lauded and given as much support as needed to encourage success. It is also important to recall that such initiatives are parts of a greater whole; the EU-facilitated dialogue itself is also one part, as is the serious work under way to provide for the many victims of the conflict in Kosovo who still await justice. Among the most essential international principles and practices for conducting truth and reconciliation processes in the post-conflict setting are impartiality, independence, transparency, complementarity with other efforts, full consultation with and the participation of all stakeholders involved, and, ultimately, commitment to the due diligence and care required for such a sensitive process.

Concentrated work needs to continue in order to improve the social and economic situation in Kosovo. Addressing unemployment, making progress in the rule of law and fighting corruption remain central for all people in Kosovo. People who find little hope or prospects within society experience frustration and isolation. Many will gravitate to alternative paths, including those leading to religious radicalization and violent extremism. As noted in the Secretary-General's report, the threat of violent extremism and terrorism remains real in Kosovo and throughout the region.

The professional work of Kosovo's security bodies continues, while better integration into regional and international approaches can greatly leverage these efforts. Through the current five-year plan coordinated by the Office of the Prime Minister, the authorities of Kosovo are also focusing on a holistic approach to the issue, including in the educational anddevelopmental spheres. That important work can also benefit from strong support and coordination with global efforts.

Coordinated responses and engagement during the recent period of increased tensions, notably involving the European Union, the Kosovo Force, UNMIK and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, among others, once again confirmed the importance of the ongoing international engagement in the maintenance of peace and stability in Kosovo and the region. Stability in Kosovo and the normalization of relations between Pristina and Belgrade are part of the broader effort to improve stability in the Western Balkans. Last week in the Security Council (see S/PV.7886), the Secretary-General highlighted the danger of instability in the Western Balkans region. Any tension or potential crisis between Belgrade and Pristina cannot be seen in isolation from the challenges that the region already faces. Good-neighbourly relations, dedication to a common future within a united European space and a commitment to human rights and the rule of law and resolving disputes only through the peaceful means of dialogue and compromise are essential for Kosovo, as they are for the entire region.

As I have reported to the Council over the past months, UNMIK has brought a newly calibrated focus to its work, providing applicable support where it is most suited and working to ensure that the parties, the EU-centred political process and all our international organizational partners benefit from well-coordinated and constant partnership on the ground. In doing so, we are grateful for the close support we receive from all members of the Council. I thank the Council most sincerely for the ongoing support.

The President: I thank Mr. Tanin for his briefing.

I wish to remind invited participants to limit their statements to no more than 10 minutes, in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. A red light will flash on the microphones when the 10-minute mark is reached.

I now give the floor to President Nikolić.

President Nikolić (*spoke in Serbian; English text provided by the delegation*): At the beginning of my statement, let me welcome Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and thank him for his overall commitment to the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) under resolution 1244 (1999). I also thank the members of this organ for the attention they give to this issue on a regular basis. I also take this opportunity to wish His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, the new Secretary-General of the United Nations, every success in his future work.

It is with sadness and sorrow that I note that Ambassador Vitaly Churkin is not with us today sitting behind the nameplate of the Russian Federation. He was a diplomat who contributed through his indefatigable work not only to protecting the interests of his country but also to international diplomacy and the global political policies of our age. Serbia will forever be grateful to him for the understanding and support he extended over many years, as well as for the dedication and energy that epitomized his work in the Security Council.

I would like to point out once again the importance of convening regular quarterly meetings of the Security Council, at unchanged intervals, to discuss the present agenda item. This is an important contribution to transparency and openness and, equally relevant, it is the only way to create conditions for the unhindered implementation of UNMIK's mandate in Kosovo and Metohija. Also, these meetings lend support to the dialogue conducted between Belgrade and Pristina with the facilitation of the European Union (EU).

We fully agree with the observation in the report (S/2017/95/Rev.1) before us regarding the importance of ensuring that UNMIK is appropriately resourced to address current and emerging challenges, including fragile reconciliation and the evolving threat of violent extremism. It is evident that the United Nations Mission needs optimal, larger staffing and financial capabilities in order to address all the requirements of the implementation of its mandate.

There is no doubt that the Republic of Serbia is committed to resolving all outstanding issues through dialogue within a status-neutral framework. Only through such an approach will it be possible to bring about stabilization in the southern Serbian province and uphold Serbia's right, as a sovereign State, to

territorial integrity. Our primary goal was, is and will be to safeguard peace, stability and human lives. By responding determinedly to all the challenges, the Government institutions of the Republic of Serbia have been instrumental in easing the tensions in Kosovo and Metohija when they threatened to escalate. The message that I send to all extremists from this organ is that peaceful solutions have no alternative. Problems and outstanding issues must be solved through dialogue, and not by threats and the use of force.

The Republic of Serbia expects the international community to stand united in defence of this civilizational achievement. In that context, I would like to emphasize in particular the detrimental statements made in respect of a possible formation of an army of Kosovo. It would be a gross violation of resolution 1244 (1999) and, at the same time, present a new, serious threat to the efforts invested in stabilizing not only Kosovo and Metohija, but also the Western Balkans.

The Republic of Serbia will continue to pursue a responsible and peaceful policy and will provide no excuse to anybody to engage in escalation and violence. In the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, Serbia has sought to pave the way towards gradual normalization. For a genuine and implementable agreement, though, it is necessary that the other interlocutor be sincere too.

Serbia's proposals submitted within the dialogue have been constructive and realistic. Also, my country has been ready for compromises. All along, we have striven to find mutually acceptable solutions to for many complex issues. That approach by Serbia has not been reciprocated by the other side, which often stalls the implementation of commitments it has assumed by agreement and signature. Certain results have been achieved, but they are far from what is expected.

For its part — only one part, though — Serbia is firmly committed to the preservation of peace and the creation of conditions in which all residents of Kosovo and Metohija will be ensured security and respect for basic human rights. This is the place and opportunity for us to face the fact that the situation in Kosovo and Metohija is, as borne out by the reports of the Secretary-General on the work of UNMIK, different altogether.

Let me recall that more than 200,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) continue to live in central Serbia, without any hope of ever returning home. Regrettably, such hope is not provided by the international presence either. Serbia is interested in protecting the lives and property of all the residents of the province and creating conditions for sustainable IDP returns. Yet all our commitments to the dialogue, agreed to by Belgrade and Pristina and facilitated by the European Union, are continually undercut by violations of agreements and aggressive acts of the authorities in Pristina. The aim is to provoke conflicts — from the ban on Serbian-language textbooks to the continuous attacks on Serbs and their property and the unlawful attempt at confiscating the Mining, Metallurgy and Chemical Combine at Trepca, to the latest instance of preventing a Belgrade train from entering Kosovo and Metohija, the gravest violation of the basic human rights and the freedom of movement.

Traffic connections among people in the twenty-first century cannot be considered a provocation against anyone; rather, they are an obligation of all civilized societies to ensure economic development and decent living conditions to its citizens. Let me point out in that regard that the initiative for the operation of a train on that route was not made by politicians, but by students of the only university in Kosovo and Metohija in which instruction is in Serbian. The request of over 10,000 young men and women for a better and more economical traffic connection with Belgrade and the rest of central Serbia was met by threats, the mining of the line and recourse to long guns and combat vehicles. Such an approach is in direct contravention of the spirit of the dialogue aimed at normalizing relations and poses a serious threat to peace and stability in the region.

They say that the train was carrying the message that Kosovo is an integral part of Serbia and that it was a provocation that they were ready to stop by the force of arms. There is not a single decision of the United Nations under which Kosovo and Metohija is not a constituent part of Serbia. For me, the real provocation is that all representatives of the provisional administration in Pristina continue to aver that Kosovo is an independent State. Would members justify the actions of Serbia, a State Member of the United Nations, if it responded to that provocation with the threat of arms?

I am sure that members share my concern at the dispatch, short of the mandatory agreement of the local Serbian community, of the ethnically pure special police units, armed with offensive weapons, to the north of Kosovo and Metohija, populated by and large by Serbs still harbouring a vivid memory of the wave of organized ethnic cleansing in March 2004. In that wave, let me recall, Serbs were expelled from almost all cities

and towns in Kosovo and Metohija. The deployment of special police units is absolutely unacceptable and represents a call to armed conflict. Ask them what orders they had in case the train full of students were to appear at the administrative crossing. They did not know how to answer me at a meeting in Brussels in the presence of Ms. Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Perhaps they will tell the Council. Perhaps they will tell the Council, as there are many here who support their behaviour, which was a direct threat to civilian lives.

The manifestation of the institutional intention to use violence against peace-loving students — members of non-Albanian communities — was also a serious threat to peace in a volatile security situation in Kosovo and Metohija. Just as it has on many previous occasions, the Republic of Serbia also reacted reasonably and responsibly on that occasion, taking decisions and conveying messages whose only goal was to preserve peace and whatever level of stability existed in the region and to eliminate the danger posed to the lives of the remaining non-Albanian population in the province. In no way has Serbia ever provided any pretext to Albanian extremists, yet they continue to employ every asset to provoke conflict on a larger scale. That bona fide compromise-based approach of ours is also reflected in the 4 February agreement on the landscaping of part of the area near the bridge in Kosciuszko and Mitrovica.

Almost four years have elapsed since the signing of the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations. A key segment of the agreement, agreed and signed, relates to the establishment of the association/community of Serb municipalities in Kosovo. Unfortunately, it has not been started yet. Pristina representatives are sending ever more open messages that they are not interested in the community and that they will not honour the agreement guaranteed by the EU. The obstinacy of the Pristina negotiators will not be checked by a few public criticisms of Pristina made in the West en passant.

Serbia demands that Pristina honour the agreement reached four years ago, nothing more, nothing less. Serbia also expects to hear the united and powerful voice of the international community, including that of our partners from the European Union, against the callous position held by Pristina on this issue of vital importance to the Serbs. What is the use of agreements reached and obligations assumed if they are not implemented?

The establishment of the association/community of Serb municipalities in Kosovo is a precondition for the normal life and sustainable survival of the Serbian people in the province; it provides for systemic, institutional protection of guaranteed human rights. As such, it also deserves to be accorded much greater attention in the reports of the Secretary-General, whose task it is to protect basic human rights, primarily the right to life, freedom of movement, housing, the right to work and education, the right to the preservation of the cultural uniqueness of a people and the freedom of religion.

Serbia confers by agreement all those rights on the Provisional Institutions in Pristina. Under the Brussels Agreement, Pristina has to confer all such rights on the association/community of Serb municipalities in Kosovo, the institution that is to implement them within the non-Albanian and, especially, Serbian populations in Kosovo and Metohija, in municipalities in which they constitute the majority. The association/community of Serb municipalities in Kosovo was entrusted the task of establishing the rule of law and human freedoms for the Serbs through the institutions of the system.

It is also in that context that Serbia views the importance of convening regular meetings of the Security Council from which messages are sent to either side, especially to Pristina, that agreements are not, and cannot be, just a dead letter and that, instead, they must be achieved in practice and enforced. Four years is more than sufficient time. Procrastination and excuses must no longer be taken lightly. The establishment and the commencement of the work of the association/community of Serb municipalities in Kosovo is of primary importance. The dynamics must be defined and the date on which the management team will commence work must be determined, while the community is to be based exclusively on what has been agreed and not on some subsequent attempts to unilaterally change the agreements that have already been reached with facilitation by the EU.

The establishment of the association/community of Serb municipalities in Kosovo, with substantive powers provided for by the Brussels Agreement and by accompanying agreements, rather than with the competencies of a non-governmental organization, is also necessary in order to prevent a further escalation

of mistrust. Anything else would amount to the flouting of commitments that have already been made and would render the very dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina meaningless.

The situation in Kosovo and Metohija continues to be characterized by a continued lack of physical and legal safety for the Serbs and all other non-Albanians, especially for IDPs, either who have returned or are willing to return to their previous homes. The padlocks on the Church of Christ the Saviour in Pristina symbolize the intolerance of, and the attitude towards, non-Albanian communities, especially the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija. Behind that unambiguous anti-civilizational act is the resolve to erase all traces of the existence of the Serbian people and their culture from a city in which more than 50,000 Serbs lived until 1999. The international community must not allow the brutal ethnic cleansing of the Serbs and other non-Albanians from Pristina to be carried out symbolically by the violent acts of usurpation of this holy site. Every effort to create at least an illusion of a multi-ethnic society in Kosovo and Metohija is rendered meaningless in that way. The Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija are therefore sent an abundantly clear message that their centuries-long history, culture and religion are unwelcome.

In their fictitious endeavours to protect the Serbian cultural and religious heritage, Pristina resorts to double talk — as historical, cultural and religious heritage is not protected from the desecration, arson and destruction of the centuries-long Christian heritage that belongs not only to the Serbs, but also to the medieval memory of humankind. A truly democratic society cannot be developed in an atmosphere in which the crimes committed against the Serbs and other non-Albanians, their property and historical, cultural and religious heritage and identity go unpunished. That is also becoming increasingly clear to those countries that once supported the attempt by the authorities in Pristina to join UNESCO.

I emphasize that there can be no true reconciliation unless all crimes are tried. It is an obligation towards the families, who have the right to find out the truth about the fate of their loved ones. The Republic of Serbia has never called into question the need for all those who committed war crimes, irrespective of their ethnic identity, to be brought to justice, on the contrary. At the same time, in that regard, it is of the utmost importance not to resort to manipulation and abuse for political purposes, employed ever so often by the authorities in Pristina. This provides clear evidence of Pristina's lack of readiness to assume responsibility within its own ranks for war crimes. I point that out well aware of the upcoming commencement of the work of the Specialist Chambers, established to try the crimes committed in Kosovo and Metohija in connection with the assertions in the Dick Marty report on the trafficking in human organs of abducted Serbs, as well as other war crimes and crimes against humanity. Serbia also attaches great importance to the solution of the problem of missing persons, as a priority humanitarian question.

The French judiciary is to decide on the request to extradite Ramush Haradinaj to Serbia. He is accused of committing the gravest war crimes. In an attempt to flee justice, this brute, one of the commanders of the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army, does not refrain even today from openly threatening Europe and the world with a new war and states that "Serbia will fare just as it did in 1999".

Allow me to take the Council back in just a couple of sentences to 1999, not through the stories of the people killed, innocent civilian victims and ruins, of the destruction and demolition during the aggression, which is not difficult for me to recall was carried out against a sovereign European State, without the approval of the Security Council and the United Nations. Instead, I shall advise of the consequences with which we live 18 years later and include facts also available to the World Health Organization. Science has established that, once the micro- and nano-particles of depleted uranium enter the body, they have heavy metal radioactive and toxic effects and, if they are sufficiently small, they pass through all corporal barriers, including the blood-brain barrier and the placenta, and can be found in all tissues and organs of a contaminated person, as well as in the intrauterine fetus.

Research conducted in 2004 by Gatti and Montanari reveals that if someone comes from a territory hit by missiles containing depleted uranium, one cannot exclude the presence of depleted uranium as a potential pathogen, even if there is no proof of its presence in that person's tissue. That is telling proof that nuclear arms, including those containing depleted uranium, are in fact by-products of civilization. They are an invisible, ideal killer and a means of mass transgenerational destruction, leading to lasting irriversible changes in all natural organisms, despite being the end result of state-of-the-art technology. The bombs containing depleted uranium that were dropped on Serbia 18

years ago are today damaging the ecosystem of the entire planet.

However, I leave that topic to be considered by us all to be an inseparable part of the Security Council's mission in the field of armament, the use of arms and the consequences to humankind's future survival on planet Earth. I do not know, therefore, why there was no strong condemnation of what I would refer to as clear threats made by Ramush Haradinaj. Impunity for the crimes committed must not be allowed or tolerated. It is a civilizational matter and a litmus test for the entire membership of the United Nations. It is an opportunity for us to demonstrate that law and justice are above politics and that all victims are equal in suffering.

Many incidents confirm that security in Kosovo and Metohija continues to be unstable and that there is a latent danger of escalating violence. I would reiterate that it is the returnees in the nationally mixed environments who are the most vulnerable. Accordingly, this question should be accorded greater attention in the reports of the Secretary-General.

Let me give a concrete example: between 1 October 2016 and 31 January 2017, that is, in the past four months alone, over 30 ethnically motivated attacks against Serbs and other non-Albanians have been recorded. Physical attacks were committed, attempts were made to prevent displaced persons from celebrating Christmas Eve in the Church of the Assumption of Holy Virgin Mary in Djakovica, the property of returnees was broken into and set on fire and the memorial plaque of the abducted Serbian journalists in the municipality of Orahovac was damaged once again. A bomb was planted near the Orthodox church in the Serbian part of Orahovac, an explosive device was found at the water-supply line in Kosovska Mitrovica, a school bus with children aboard was stoned on the road between Silovo and Koretiste — all of these instances evince the discrepancy between Pristina's formal pronouncements and the reality on the ground.

Is it not a clear cause for concern and reaction by the entire international community that Serbs continue to be prevented from visiting their churches and graveyards even during the major Christian holidays, such as Christmas? If the international community is not concerned and does not stop these prohibitions, it is sending a clear message that it approves Pristina's position that the Serbs are unwanted, that they will never be able to be the masters of their own destiny, that there are no conditions for their safe return, and that their lives — let alone their property and security — will never be safe.

The restitution of private property, which is one of the most frequent violations of human rights that internally displaced persons from Kosovo and Metohija are facing, remains an unresolved problem. Over 40,000 requests for the restitution of illegally seized and usurped property have been submitted to the Kosovo Property Agency, which is under the control of Pristina. Out of the requests, some 97 per cent were submitted by Serbs and other non-Albanians, while approximately 18,000 lawsuits relative to compensation for property damage were filed in courts in the province.

It is therefore evident that the basic conditions for the sustainable return of the displaced are not present, with the lack of guarantees for the safety of persons and the protection of property, the absence of the rule of law and the widespread discrimination against and lack of respect for the non-Albanian population and their fundamental human and civil rights and freedoms. The number of returnees to Pristina continues to be discouragingly small, despite the fact that the creation of conditions conducive to an unhindered and long-term sustainable return is one of the main tasks of UNMIK's mandate.

It is clear that UNMIK carries out this part of its mission with difficulty, the key reason being the absence political will of the majority community and its unwavering intolerance of all other communities. For example, a declaration aadopted by the local Municipal Assembly in Suva Reka makes the return of internally displaced persons to Mušutište contingent upon the resolution of the question of missing persons and upon an apology by the Republic of Serbia and the Kosovar Serbs for crimes allegedly committed during the conflicts of 1999. Of no value at all are the Serbs' title deeds proving ownership of property or the right to live in houses they have inherited from their forefathers. Empty, too, are the Brussels Agreement and the UNMIK mandate.

No one reacts to such wilful acts or the denial of all rights to Serbian returnees. Failure to react to such incidents is a form of tacit acceptance of, or even the support for, the continuation of such practices, which is neither in the spirit of Security Council resolutions nor any other United Nations instruments and declarations, in clear violation of the spirit of law and justice. We

therefore request that the question of minority rights be accorded greater attention in the reports of the Secretary-General on the work of UNMIK.

It is evident that systemic, legal, administrative, institutional and political threats to the human rights of the non-Albanian communities are widespread in Kosovo and Metohija. Systemic double standards in which members of non-Albanian communities have to face numerous obstacles when trying to exercise their rights — the most basic right to live without fear of physical violence, the right to see perpetrators punished, the right to return and stay in the place of return, the right to employment and the right for children to receive an education, the right to health protection, property rights and religious rights — are the rule. As long as crimes go unpunished and as long as the authorities in Pristina carry out their designs without consequences and fail to implement the provisions of the Brussels Agreement, a dignified life in a multi-ethnic community will not be possible. In that regard, I note the responsibility of the United Nations.

In a word, it must not be allowed that the questions of essential importance for a normal and dignified life of Serbs and the members of other non-Albanian communities be submerged in general statistics without regard to the ethnic component that underlies all the problems in Kosovo and Metohija. That path cannot be acceptable when it is construed as proof of readiness to accept the existing conditions without the intention of making any substantial changes, proceeding from the fact that enclaves have their own distinctive problems and are worthy first and foremost of recognition by the State and of greater efforts towards resolving numerous everyday problems.

On this occasion, I would also like to reiterate that we consider it necessary to introduce a new section in the report with respect to northern Metohija, which would focus on the situation of the minority communities south of the Ibar River. Radicalization of the political climate and the strengthening of the political, ethnic and religious intolerance amplify the instability of the security situation in Kosovo and Metohija.

A drastic increase in religious extremism, with elements of terrorism, is evident in the province, as are activities by radicalized extremists returning from the battlefields of the Middle East. At the same time as the political situation of Kosovar Albanians becomes more polarized, a trend towards further escalation is observable, with the constant threat of the Albanian electorate redirecting its discontent to the members of the non-Albanian communities, primarily the Serbs, which requires heightened attention from the international presence.

Guided by the interest of regional stability and a vision for a different life in the region, and truly dedicated to reconciliation, the rule of law and democratic values, the Republic of Serbia is firmly committed to maintaining the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, whose primary aim in the solution of everyday problems of the people living Kosovo and Metohija, with full respect for resolution 1244 (1999), which represents the basis and framework for the resolution of these issues. However, in order for the dialogue to be truly purposeful, it must be grounded in the genuine desire to resolve the problems on the basis of compromise, and it must not be abused as a platform for the imposition of the interests of one side alone, especially not for the purposes of promoting the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo, which the Republic of Serbia will never recognize.

The solution to the question of Kosovo and Metohija cannot be based on diktat and on the presentation of a fait accompli to the Republic of Serbia. The solution is only possible through dialogue and by solutions acceptable to all sides. The last thing we want is for the situation in Kosovo and Metohija to pose a constant threat to the stability and progress of both Serbia and the region, for which reason we shall continue our dedicated work on the process of normalization and responsibility and regardless of the increasingly frequent manifestations of the lack of constructiveness and the presence of harmful unilateral actions by the other side.

There are numerous examples of unilateral steps that Pristina has taken outside the agreements reached within the dialogue, such as the attempts to join international organizations. As a matter of fact, the dialogue provides for the resolution of all issues — all issues — through the dialogue between the two parties with the facilitation of the European Union. Detrimental is the habit of Pristina authorities to resort to unilateral actions, with the support of some major Powers, the sponsors of their attempts at independence, contrary to the Brussels dialogue as the agreed framework for resolving the outstanding issues. The continuity of this regrettable practice is evinced by Kosovo's efforts to join UNESCO, INTERPOL and other organizations, which unnecessarily disturbs the atmosphere in which the

dialogue takes place and which is keeping us back from what is supposed to be the primary goal for both sides, namely, the stabilization of the situation in the region and the quest for sustainable and mutually acceptable solutions. Serbia, for its part, honours agreements.

Five years ago, I decided to join the dialogue with the provisional authorities in Pristina in order to calm the tensions and, above all, ensure a normal and safe life for Serbs and the non-Albanian minorities in Kosovo and Metohija. Serbia's experiences in the dialogue have made me wonder if I did the right thing. Many forget that, historically, Kosovo and Metohija is the territory of Serbia, and not of the Albanians, who, according to the Ottoman census, did not even live in the territories in the fourteenth century.

It is forgotten that Kosovo Day, in which Kosovo as a Serbian land was celebrated in the United States some 99 years ago. On that occasion, President Woodrow Wilson sent a message of American goodwill towards Serbia and the Serbian people to the Serbian community of the United States. It is forgotten that the Serbs had founded their State on the territory of Kosovo in the Middle Ages, and that ever since the Serbian emperors and kings built their churches and monasteries there, most of which are inscribed on the UNESCO List of World Heritage Sites as Serbian heritage. Unfortunately, most of them are also now on the List of World Heritage in Danger. The question arises: In danger from whom? Certainly not from us, who seek to preserve our Christian heritage.

It is also forgotten that Kosovo was populated by Albanians most intensively only in the past two centuries, especially during the dictatorship of the Communist leader Enver Hoxha, from whom they fled Albania to Kosovo and Metohija and were received by Serbs in good faith as brothers. It is forgotten that a unilateral declaration of statehood means nothing if it is not the result of an agreement with the mother country and people. That this is right is confirmed by the constant pressure on Serbia to renounce its territory, the land where it established its statehood almost 10 centuries ago.

We shall not do that; no one else would. In the Council we have a guarantee in that certain permanent members respect international law and support the integrity and sovereignty of Serbia. We know that some countries recognized so-called Kosovo out of their own interests, but we also know that more than 70 per cent of humankind does not share this view.

Perhaps I am speaking to some of those present here in vain. We in Serbia say that it is futile to whisper to the deaf or to wink at the blind. Those who do not have such pain turn their backs on the pain of others. I would never wish your children to live in the conditions in which Serbian children in Kosovo and Metohija do. I would not, because I believe in the right of a child to grow up in peace, the parents' right to raise that child in peace, and people's right to live out their life, come the time, in the home of their ancestors. I would not, because I believe in God.

I would like to be clear once again: Serbia will not recognize Kosovo, whatever we might be offered in return and whatever pressures we may be subjected to. This has everything to do with the defence of principles and a permanent adherence to justice. Those who adhere to principles and fight for justice are always right.

On behalf of the citizens of Serbia, I would like to thank all of the countries that respect international law and support our position. The political leaders of Pristina should be aware of all of this so as finally to be able to embark on reasonable negotiations and to keep the promises they have made, just as their ancestors did.

On this occasion, I call on those States that have not recognized the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo to resist the shameless pressure brought to bear by the powerful and to remain true to their principled respect for international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the supreme authority of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security. I call on those States that have recognized Kosovo to reconsider their decision and thereby contribute to efforts to find mutually acceptable solutions.

Serbia is ready for agreements, but not for blackmail. It is ready for talks, but not for ultimatums or unilateral solutions. It is ready for the substantial autonomy of Kosovo and Metohija, but never for an independent State of Kosovo. And it is ready, in a context of substantial autonomy, to guarantee all rights to national communities, rights that, in the context of Serbian laws and everyday life, exceed by far the standards of most countries.

The President: I now give the floor to Ms. Çitaku.

Ms. Çitaku: Before I read out my remarks, I wish to stress that I will abide by the 10-minute time limit that you, Sir, proposed, out of respect for your time as President and out of respect for the members of the Security Council.

Secondly, allow me to convey our deep condolences in connection with the passing of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin. We disagreed on almost everything, but we appreciate his role and contribution.

Ten days ago, Kosovo celebrated the ninth anniversary of its independence. We all remember vividly that cold day in Pristina: the emotions, expectations and dreams. All the suffering that Kosovars were subjected to, the years of discrimination, exclusion, mass killings, ethnic cleansing, rape and deportation, did not deter us from pursuing our destiny. We persevered, and we succeeded. The lessons of Kosovo are quite simple; you can win if you are right and if the cause is just, even if you are not the powerful one.

Furthermore, humankind is capable of miracles. When there is solidarity among the free nations of the world, life prevails over death and good prevails over evil. We will forever be grateful for the role the Council has played, but the time has come to move on. Coming here every three months, taking up the Council's valuable time and hearing the same old stories represents an unjustified use of the Council's valuable time. Spending millions to maintain a mission in Kosovo that no longer has a function or purpose is an unjustified expenditure of United Nations resources given that we know very well that they could be put to much better use.

Frankly, I will not go through every topic mentioned in the relevant report of the Special Representative. If United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo criteria were used also to write reports about the countries of the representatives sitting around this table, trust me, many reports would have to be produced.

I will just mention briefly several issues. First, with respect to the incident that took place in the city of Gjakova, what the report failed to mention is that in 1998-1999, 1,665 civilians were killed in that city. That is 13 per cent of the entire population. In the village of Mejë alone, 373 civilians were killed in less than an hour. Three thousand women were raped. Hundreds went missing. Houses, schools and religious sites were destroyed. Yet the mayor of Gjakova, Ms. Mimoza Kusari, has been working hard to accommodate minority communities in her municipality.

For the record, the municipality has invested in the reconstruction of the Serbian Orthodox church there. The church does not pay for any utilities; the municipality covers all costs. Moreover, the municipality has invested in a small farm on the premises of the church in order to be even more accommodating to the people who are living and serving there. The Orthodox Church in Gjakova was never attacked, and there is good cooperation. The incident to which the report refers has to do with a very specific situation, that of people who were involved in war crimes coming to visit the site. This is the whole story. The context is everything, and often the reports of the Special Representative fail to provide that. While we heard from my Serbian counterpart about a parallel universe, let me please tell the Council what is happening in the real world.

First, Kosovo is a free, independent and sovereign State recognized by the overwhelming majority of the free nations of the world. Just today, Bangladesh recognized the Republic of Kosovo, and we wish to thank its Government and its people. We wish also to thank the people and the Government of Singapore, which recognized Kosovo previously, in December. It is very clear that this process is unstoppable.

Kosovo is a member of more than 50 regional and international organizations and on a clear path towards becoming a member of the European Union, and soon, hopefully, a Member of the United Nations. The legitimacy of our cause was sealed by the crystal-clear ruling of the International Court of Justice. The Court ruled that States exists for the population, not vice versa, thereby confirming without any ambiguity that we did not break any international law when we declared our independence.

Secondly, just because Serbia refuses to accept us as a State does not make us any less of a State. That only signifies that Serbia is a neighbour that remains hostage to its own hegemonic and neo-colonial past. Its attitude is clearly demonstrated by the abuse of the issuance of an INTERPOL red notice, as we recently witnessed in the case of the detention of the former Prime Minister of Kosovo, Mr. Ramush Haradinaj. Mr. Haradinaj was twice acquitted at The Hague tribunal, and we have absolutely no doubt that the justice system in France will function professionally and release him. That is long overdue.

This is not justice. This is not prosecution. This is persecution. Furthermore, this is a desperate act by Serbia to reverse history. As a reminder to everyone, Serbia conducted and levelled similar trials and charges against all Western leaders in 2000, including Bill Clinton, Tony Blair, Jacques Chirac, Gerhard Schröder and Javier Solana, among others. We have no doubt that this Kafkaesque process will end soon and that Mr. Haradinaj will return to Kosovo where he belongs, but the really disturbing element in all of this drama is Serbia's failure to deal with its own past — with the real and not the fictional crimes that were committed in Kosovo during the war.

Just last month, the Humanitarian Law Center in Belgrade published a shiver-inducing report substantiated by facts and figures of unprecedented measures that Serbia undertook to hide traces of war crimes, going so far as building structures on top of the mass graves. According to Serbian logic, Churchill, De Gaulle, Roosevelt and Eisenhower should have faced the Nuremberg trials — not the Nazis. Let us imagine just for one second those thousands of families in Kosovo who are demanding answers and a proper burial for their loved ones. Instead of finding the strength to deal with their own past, catharsis and de-Nazification, Serbia has chosen the path of denial. Zero is the number of Serbians charged or convicted for war crimes committed in Kosovo. Instead, they are being promoted to high-level positions, such as in the case of General Diković, the current Chief of Staff of the Serbian Armed Forces, who, as has been documented, is responsible for the killing of 1,400 civilians.

The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) is and was not a terrorist organization. The KLA has been the most successful liberation movement in recent history.

What we face on an almost daily basis from Serbia are one-sided provocations aimed at destabilizing Kosovo. There is a train service that runs twice daily between Kosovo and Serbia. People commute from one side of the border to the other. There was never a problem, until one day in mid-January when Serbia decided to send a train fully-loaded with hatred to Kosovo covered with the slogan "Kosovo is Serbia" translated into 21 languages, including Albanian.

Now, really, does anyone have any idea of what Serbia thinking? Would any Council member sitting around this table allow the same thing to happen in his or her country? Kosovo, of course, took measures to stop the train, and after seeing our resolve, just before it reached the border, Serbia decided to stop the train. Frankly speaking, there is no reason to praise Serbia for doing that. It is playing the roles of both pyromaniac and fireman. It should not be rewarded for fixing a problem that it created in the first place. We experienced a similar situation with regard to the wall that was built in the centre of the city of Mitrovica and later removed by those who put it there in the first place. Those kinds of games should end.

Serbs living in Kosovo should not be held hostage by Serbia and played as pawns in order to create leverage. They should be masters of their own lives. Kosovo institutions have gone to great lengths to accommodate their needs. Unprecedented legislative and constitutional measures have been put in place in order to make sure that their rights are guaranteed. We will, in accordance with our Constitution, implement all the agreements that we reached in Brussels. We will establish the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities but only in accordance with our Constitution, without their having any legislative or executive power.

We will not allow Serbia to hold us back and hostage to its own troubling past. We understand that dealing with the past is sometimes more difficult for the perpetrator than for the victim. Questions need to be answered and, for some, that past is shameful. We will not discuss with Serbia or with anyone else the establishment and the creation of our own armed forces. That is a legitimate and a sovereign decision for the Kosovo authorities to make.

Although the President of Kosovo established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission because we believe that every family and every victim, regardless of ethnicity, deserves truth and justice, what we heard from Serbian President in January was a call for war. Now, obviously, there will be no war — we all know how the last one ended — but in order to build sustainable peace, the absence of war is not enough. I should be clear that we in Kosovo will not be distracted. We know exactly who we are, and we know exactly what we want. We want peace, dialogue and reconciliation, but never submission.

Young, dedicated and selfless people in Kosovo are writing history and making us proud every day. These include Majlinda Kelmendi, who once again won the world judo championship, and Arta Dobroshi and Shpat

Deda, who collaborated with British producers and just brought home our first award from the British Academy of Film and Television Arts.

In the real world, beyond politics and political turmoil, there is a Kosovo in which youngsters try hard, challenge the boundaries imposed by politics, dream big and never let us down. I would like to invite everyone here to come and visit, so that they can see with their own eyes what Kosovo looks like today.

The President: I thank Ms. Çitaku for her statement.

I now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the participation in today's meeting of the President of Serbia, His Excellency Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, and share the serious concerns he expressed about the situation in Kosovo. We thank Ambassador Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and his team for their briefing on the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), highlighting that serious problems persist in the region. Many of those problems, however, have been urgently awaiting solutions for years. We categorically refuse to accept the practice of directing unilateral and offensive insults at Serbia and its people. One should first cast out the beam from one's own eye.

The report of the Secretary-General on the Mission in Kosovo (S/2017/95/Rev.1) is generally objective and deserves to be commended. It and Mr. Tanin's briefing this morning reflect the growing level of tension between the parties and the presence in the region of outstanding issues, most of them in key areas, particularly those relating to the protection of the political, economic, social and religious rights of the Serb community. It is becoming clear why the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, which has already been in a prolonged deadlock, is in danger of breaking down. That is primarily the result of the biased attitude of the European Union, which, as intermediary, has not exerted the proper degree of influence on the Kosovo-Albanian side regarding implementation of the agreements. Above all, what is at issue is the fundamental question of the establishment of an association/community of Serb-majority municipalities of Kosovo, which, we must not forget, is a key point of the agreement of 19 April 2013 on the principles of the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina. There has been plenty of discussion and many pronouncements about national reconciliation and the creation of a multi-ethnic society in Kosovo, but no sign whatever of practical steps to achieve those things.

We also categorically refuse to accept the attempt to distance Belgrade from the process of resolving some of the most important issues surrounding the protection of the lives of the Kosovo's Serbian community. No one — neither Serbia nor Serbs living in Kosovo — will ever accept that. Many members of the international community will not accept it. We are disturbed at the lack of an appropriate reaction among the international community to Pristina's ongoing attempts to wrest away economic assets that belong to Serbs, including the Trepča industrial complex and major electric power facilities. During the recent exacerbation of tensions, not even feeble attempts were made to urge Kosovars to comply with the sensitive agreements. On the contrary, it is always the Serbs who are leaned on from the other side, time after time.

We note Belgrade's constructive attitude. On 5 February, the Serbs began to dismantle the walls around a pedestrian zone in North Mitrovica, something that, let us not forget, the Pristina authorities had insisted on. Serbia fulfilled its obligations regarding the International Telecommunication Union's establishment of a separate telephone code for Kosovo. Thanks to Belgrade's restrained position, an escalation of conflict was avoided when, on 14 January, heavily armed units of Kosovo-Albanian police invaded Serb-populated areas of Kosovo in order to prevent the resumption of train service between Belgrade and North Mitrovica; this unprovoked measure was a gross violation of the current agreement on freedom of movement across the administrative boundary line. Pristina should have no security forces in northern Kosovo, where the Serbian population lives. That is a key element of the agreements.

The dialogue's effectiveness is undermined by the fact that some countries that pay lip service to the idea of dialogue are playing a double game. They encourage the unilateral attitude in Kosovo to applications for membership in international bodies, prompting other States to recognize Kosovan sovereignty. The renewed declarations by Pristina of its intention to seek membership in the Council of Europe, INTERPOL and UNESCO are nothing but open provocations. Incidents, including some involving physical violence towards non-Albanian nationalists, continue to

occur. Stone-throwing at buses carrying Serbian schoolchildren and Orthodox Christian pilgrims is commonplace. Kosovo's law enforcement bodies react extremely sluggishly, and in most cases the perpetrators are never found. All of this creates obstacles to the already almost paralysed process for returning refugees to the region.

On 4 January, we noted the arrest in France, at the request of Serbia, of Ramush Haradinaj, the leader of the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo and former Kosovo Liberation Army insurgent. We await the completion of all the formalities necessary to enable the launching of a special investigation into the Kosovo Liberation Army's crimes as soon as possible. If the perpetrators are not brought to justice, regardless of the positions they may currently occupy, it will be impossible to achieve national reconciliation or a comprehensive settlement.

We consider enabling the creation of a Kosovo-Albanian armed force on territory under a United Nations mandate unacceptable. Such an act contravenes resolution 1244 (1999), which supports the presence on Kosovo's territory of a multinational force under international control, exclusively. When dealing with any issues related to Kosovo security forces, the views of Serbia and Kosovo Serbs must be taken into account. As long as we are talking about national reconciliation and a multi-ethnic society, those views must be taken into consideration. One indisputable priority should be ensuring the security of the Kosovo Serb community, for which the Kosovo-Albanian authorities and international organizations in the region are responsible, particularly the Kosovo Force, whose mandate includes relevant provisions in that regard.

Serious issues regarding the protection of Serbian religious and cultural heritage continue. The Serbian Orthodox Church is encountering obstacles in gaining access to religious sites, which they need to be able to do, among other things, in order to put them back in order in the wake of acts of vandalism. The Kosovo authorities have long prevented the completion of the construction of the church of Christ the Saviour in Pristina, and now they have also blocked the reconstruction of the church of Saint Nicholas in the Holy Archangels Monastery in Prizren by refusing building permission to the Serbian Orthodox Church. This very typical act does not jibe with Kosovo's professed desire to become a member of UNESCO.

The task of countering the spread of Islamic radicalism and terrorism in Kosovo has lost none of its urgency. It is a worrying fact that the region is used for recruiting insurgents to fight with extremists in the Middle East and to prepare acts of terrorism in other countries. Incidentally, major Western publications often feature reporting on the subject of the fact that when these insurgents get done fighting and return home they create the problem of what to do with them.

Given the current situation, we see no grounds for reviewing the Security Council's quarterly consideration of the question of Kosovo. On the contrary, the regional dynamics require us to intensify our attention to the situation in Kosovo, and any talk of reducing the level of the United Nations presence in the region provided by UNMIK, under the leadership of Ambassador Tanin, is inappropriate. There can be no doubt that he is playing a key role in the situation in Kosovo, or that UNMIK remains the central instrument for international monitoring and contributes to normalizing the situation, in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999) — which remains in force in its entirety. The resolution cannot be changed unilaterally. That is an absolute political taboo.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to thank Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia, for his presence and participation here today. At the same time, I would like to thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his informative briefing.

One of the main principles of the foreign policy of Uruguay is respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. In exercising their sovereignty, States are free to alter their borders, provided that it is in keeping with international law and done through peaceful means and agreements that have been freely consented to. Uruguay takes this opportunity to reaffirm compliance with resolution 1244 (1999), adopted by the Security Council.

We express our concern about reference in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/95/Rev.1) to the fact that tensions between Belgrade and Pristina have reached worrying levels. Uruguay calls for a committed dialogue that would lead to stability in the region, as well as progress and an improvement in the situation of the people living in the area. I hope that

the high-level meetings that took place in January and early February within the framework of the Belgrade dialogue, facilitated by the European Union, will yield positive results in order to reduce the tension that arose during the period covered by the report.

The topic of human rights should be at the centre of any reconciliation process. In order to lay the foundation for the future, we must heal the wounds of the past. In that respect, it is crucial to clarify the situation of all missing persons. Also crucial to the reconciliation process is resolving the situation of the internally displaced persons and guaranteeing conditions for their safe return.

Another fundamental aspect that I would like to point out is the question of migrants. In that respect, considering the special circumstances in the Balkans as a route for migrants, I would like to stress the necessity of protecting the rights of migrants and refugees. We therefore welcome the statement by the Secretary-General that asylum seekers in the zone have been dealt with in accordance with international humanitarian law.

I would like to acknowledge the important work that is done on the ground by UNMIK, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and the Kosovo Force, which are acting in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999). I would also like to highlight the recent campaign carried out by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe on the protection of journalists in Kosovo with a view to promoting the freedom of the press and ending the insecurity those professionals often face, as well as the impunity enjoyed by their attackers.

There are many areas where we are seeing progress, and there are many that still require work. However, with the commitment of political leaders and both communities and with the support of the Council and the international system, it will be possible to achieve peace and security in a stable environment in which the communities can coexist peacefully.

Mr. Lambertini (Italy): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Zahir Tanin, for his detailed update on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We also welcome the presence of the President of Serbia, Mr. Nikolić, and recognize the presence of Ambassador Çitaku.

We welcome the detailed report (S/2017/95/Rev.1) presented by the Secretary-General on the situation in Kosovo and on the activities of UNMIK. That should actually be the main purpose of our meeting today. We want to stress that the report highlights some progress as well as some critical issues, and clearly depicts a situation that continues to remain fragile due to internal political problems, as well as to an overall deterioration of relations among western Balkan countries.

We are very concerned by the rising tensions in recent weeks, leading to the use of heated rhetoric and hampering the improvement of relations between the two sides. We call on both Belgrade and Pristina to abstain from inflammatory statements and backward-looking language. In that regard, I would like to emphasize our strong support to the normalization of their relations and encourage them to constructively advance the dialogue facilitated by the European Union (EU). We commend the effort of the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Ms. Federica Mogherini, to convene at the highest level the latest rounds of the dialogue in Brussels on 24 January and 1 February, where the parties agreed to defuse tensions, refrain from unilateral acts and continue to work together.

Remarkable progress has already been achieved with important steps forward in the areas of integration of the judiciary, freedom of movement and telecommunications. But much remains to be done to implement the agreements already reached. We strongly encourage Belgrade and Pristina to work in that direction and to find pragmatic and mutually acceptable solutions to the advantage of both communities, starting with the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo.

The normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina will have a crucial impact on regional equilibrium. Allow me to underscore once again that key to the path towards the European Union is durable peace, stability and prosperity in the western Balkans, which are inherently linked to progress in the EU-facilitated dialogue. Losing momentum now could open the way to a counterproductive backlash, to the detriment of both parties and the entire region. Our support of this process is unwavering at both the bilateral level and in multilateral forums.

We stand at the front line to assist in the consolidation of Kosovo authorities and to improve local ownership, as seen in our long-standing contribution to UNMIK, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) and the Kosovo Force. In that vein, we welcome the entry into force of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union. At this point, it is of primary importance that Pristina step up efforts in the fight against corruption and organized crime, and that it ratify the border agreement with Montenegro. Effective reconciliation is at the foundation of any democratic and functional society. We welcome the results achieved so far, with the assistance of EULEX, in the rule of law and justice sector, and we look forward to the time when the Kosovo Specialist Chambers are fully operational.

I have two other main messages. First of all, international assistance to Kosovo must be based on the principles of sustainability and ownership. At present, given the volatile situation highlighted by the Secretary-General in his report, including the threat of violent extremism, we acknowledge his view on the current adequate configuration of UNMIK, and we support its role in facilitating dialogue and reconciliation at the community level. Nonetheless, we stand ready to discuss a reconfiguration of the Mission according to the evolution of the situation on the ground and that is consistent with the overall reform of peacekeeping operations. We look forward to the recommendations of the Secretary-General in that regard.

Secondly, we emphasize the pivotal role of the European Union in the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina, and call on both to send out a message of détente and constructive commitment to the European Union-facilitated dialogue, for the sake of their own populations and the stability of the entire region. We attach primary importance to the regional dimension. Boosting integration in the western Balkans is crucial to bringing them closer to Europe while improving their resilience to emerging threats and triggering their development potential.

As Chair of the Berlin process in 2017, which will culminate with the western Balkans summit in Trieste on 12 July, we focus on economic growth, infrastructure, interconnectivity, innovation, youth and the rule of law. In these priority areas, shared with the European Union and at the core of its cooperation with western Balkans countries, we are engaging all actors in an inclusive dialogue. We encourage all of them to actively participate, beginning with the implementation of soft measures on cooperation with neighbours, which are essential if the process is to be fruitful.

Within the framework of the Berlin process, we will also provide assistance to the adoption of reforms against organized crime and corruption by promoting the development of a network of anti-corruption agencies to strengthen Governments' capacity in confronting the phenomenon at the regional level.

Mr. Klein (United States of America): I thank Special Representative Tanin for his update on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

We appreciate the United Nations efforts over the years to help Kosovo build multi-ethnic, democratic institutions that uphold the rule of law and respect human rights. We are pleased that these efforts have largely been accomplished. However, even given those accomplishments and the requests of several Council members during our briefing in November (see S/PV.7811) for the United Nations to seriously reconsider UNMIK's resources, we were surprised that the report of the Secretary-General notes the "importance of ensuring that UNMIK is appropriately resourced to address current and emerging challenges" (*S/2017/95/Rev.1, para. 41*).

We believe that UNMIK is overresourced and overstaffed incomparison with its limited responsibilities. Last year, UNMIK had high levels of underspent funds in its budget. The Mission should return such resources to United Nations Headquarters rather than create unnecessary projects. And yet UNMIK, a mission that should be drawing down, is putting permanent solar panels on a building that it is renting. Kosovo is a success story and UNMIK deserves a lot of credit, but it would be unfortunate for UNMIK to be remembered not for its brave work in supporting the establishment of a new country but for lingering past its relevance.

It is time for the Secretariat to downsize UNMIK's structure, size and tasks in line with realities on the ground. The situation in Kosovo is drastically different from what it was in 1999, when the Security Council created the Mission, or in 2008, when the Secretariat restructured it. We are aware of the frictions and provocations that have occurred over the past few months, but we also note that they have been resolved calmly, collaboratively and without violence.

Recent frictions highlight the importance of the efforts of Kosovo and Serbia to pursue the normalization of relations through the Brussels dialogue, facilitated by the European Union (EU). We appreciate the recent convening by EU High Representative Mogherini of both Kosovo's and Serbia's leaders at a high-level meeting. We continue to support the vital role of the EU as a facilitator of the dialogue. Leaders in Belgrade and Pristina must continue taking the needed steps and making the difficult but necessary decisions in order to progress in the talks. We call on both Belgrade and Pristina to fully implement dialogue agreements without further delay, and to work more actively towards the normalization of relations.

The United States reaffirms its support for Kosovo as it develops as a prosperous, peaceful and mult-ethnic democracy. A democratic, stable and independent Kosovo is a force for regional stability. We continue to strongly support full international recognition of Kosovo and Kosovo's membership in all relevant international organizations, including the United Nations. We encourage United Nations Member States that have not yet done so join the more than 100 Members that have already recognized Kosovo as an independent State.

The United States is pleased to see progress towards establishing the Kosovo specialist chambers, and we encourage Kosovo to continue its commitment to that body. Kosovo needs to make greater progress in strengthening the independence of its judiciary and improving the rule of law to combat corruption, attract foreign investment and accelerate its overall development.

Finally, we again strongly urge the Council to adjust the reporting and briefing period for UNMIK from three months to six. That longer reporting period would reduce the burden on the Secretariat and the Council, both of which have far more pressing business at hand.

Mr. Hickey (United Kingdom): I thank Special Representative Tanin for his briefing.

Let me start by welcoming President Nikolić and Ambassador Çitaku to the Council today.

In the interests of keeping this meeting to time, and noting that we have many pressing issues to discuss in the Council, I shall keep my remarks brief this morning.

Like so many others here, the United Kingdom is committed to the stability and security of the western Balkans. A central part of that is our full support for the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia and the prosperity and stability that normalization would bring for both their peoples. Since we last met on this issue (see S/PV.7811), there have been many positive steps made by Kosovo towards that goal. The economy is growing and some steps have been taken to deal with corruption, including with support from the United Kingdom Government, although there is still more to do. Kosovo has secured its own international dialling code, as well as recognition from Singapore and, just this morning, from Bangladesh, as Ambassador Çitaku has already mentioned.

I would also like to note the success of the British-Kosovo film *Home*, which won the award for best short film from the British Academy of Film and Television Arts. It is Kosovo's first. Following the Oscar nomination of *Shock* last year, it is clear that Kosovo's cultural sector is going from strength to strength.

But in light of the continued progress in Kosovo, we cannot help but be concerned by the heightened tension between Serbia and Kosovo over the reporting period. At a time when both countries should be looking towards a prosperous future, we instead find ourselves here today discussing provocative acts that belong firmly in the past. At the heart of so many of these issues — whether the inflammatory train incident or the illegal wall in Mitrovica — lie narrow-minded politics and electioneering. Stirring up nationalist sentiments to advance short-term political agendas not only enflames tensions, but also distracts from the many more important issues that Kosovo and Serbia need to deal with, most particularly the implementation of important dialogue agreements.

We welcome the intense engagement of High Representative Mogherini and the European External Action Service to help bring about a resolution of those disputes. I should like to highlight specifically the excellent cooperation between the Government of Kosovo and the Kosovo-Serb Mayor of North Mitrovica on the wall issue. Such cooperation shows that, at the local level, people want to work together to improve their lives rather than be drawn into political squabbles. It is that spirit that we all should channel here in the Security Council. It is a spirit of integration and cooperation, not division. It is a spirit of dialogue. It is

a spirit that both Serbia and Kosovo claim to support in their discussions in Brussels.

And yet, here in the Council today, we have witnessed yet another meeting that has descended into lengthy exchanges and unproductive statements. It is long past time for the Council to stop contributing to the tensions in the region by holding such incendiary briefings on so regular a basis. I therefore call again for a reduction in the number of these meetings and in the number of these reports. In that spirit, let me join the United States and others in again calling for increased efficiencies to be found in the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and for the further downscaling of the Mission, in line with its mandate. We also suppport calls for the Secretariat to present proposals for restructuring the Mission in the next report — something that we note has not materialized on this occasion.

Mr. Sadykov (Kazakhstan): We thank Special Representative Zahir Tanin for his detailed briefing and his efforts and commitment to bringing peace to Kosovo.

The situation in Kosovo needs the continuing attention of the Council as an ongoing item on its agenda. Our priorities should be to continue promoting dialogue between the parties by launching confidence-building measures in the political, military, economic, environmental and human dimensions. That should be in compliance with resolution 1244 (1999) and with the efforts of the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and other relevant organizations, which must act as security providers at the global, regional and national levels.

Moreover, while the peaceful dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade is ongoing, a number of difficult issues remain to be solved. Action must therefore be taken to integrate the judiciary, build transitional justice, transfer the functions and assets to local authorities and lay the foundations of good governance and the rule of law. Social stability will be achieved only with the full engagement of the United Nations country team, regional organizations and civil society groups working towards peacebuilding and conflict prevention and mediation in Kosovo.

Upholding human rights is critical, with a special focus on implementing resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, and subsequent resolutions on enhancing gender equality and empowerment.

We also believe that the rich cultural heritage of Kosovo should be preserved as a bridge-builder for community relations and good-neighbourly relations.

Mr. Okamura (Japan): Please allow me to thank His Excellency President Nikolić of Serbia and Her Excellency Ambassador Çitaku of Kosovo for their briefings. I also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Tanin for his briefing and continued service.

As indicated in the report (S/2017/95/Rev.1) of the Secretary-General, the escalation of tension between Pristina and Belgrade is a matter of concern. Violent extremism, radicalization and terrorism continue to pose a threat to security in Kosovo and the region. However, the risk and intensity of violence are considerably less than those in other regions often taken up by the Security Council, such as Africa or the Middle East. Limited peacekeeping resources should be allocated to areas where there is an urgent need for them. If the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) is indeed still necessary in its current configuration, as suggested by the report of the Secretary-General, the Council must identify the activities that specifically require such an UNMIK presence.

The efficient and effective functioning of the Council should also take priority. Indeed, improving working methods is of keen interest to all Council members. In that regard, we do not see any reason that meetings on UNMIK need to be held as frequently as during the time of the adoption of resolution 1244 (1999). A meeting and report every six months is sufficient. In spite of it all, personally, I myself appreciate the opportunity every three months to recall my memories of Kosovo. I mentioned wine the last time (see S/PV.7811); today I would like to talk about business opportunities.

The Trepča mines hold the largest natural resources in Kosovo and could potentially generate large sums of tax revenue. However, it is regrettable that challenges remain in the business of operating the mines. At the same time, there are other types of businesses in Kosovo. Allow me to share one example here. In 2013, a Japanese company established a farm and factory in Mitrovica, which produces shiitake mushrooms. By making use of Japanese high technology, the company has a production capacity of eight tons of mushrooms a day. It exports its produce to 12 countries in Europe

and North America. I have not brought any mushrooms with me today, and will not mention the name of the company. But I can share its contact details and home page later if anyone is interested.

Kosovo also has rich tourism resources. There is a magnificent waterfall in Mirusha, and Gadime e Poshtme is proud to be home to a mysterious limestone cavern. People can enjoy trout raised in fish farms in Istog at a restaurant adjacent to the farm. I even found a good natural hot spring — known as onsen in Japanese — near Peja, and I myself had a bath there. The sulphurous white water is pleasant and warm, just the right type of onsen for Japanese people like me. Mosques in Prizren and Orthodox monasteries in Dečani and Gračanica are breathtaking. Such sites appear in all Kosovo travel guides — such as the one I have here, which members can find in book shops — and represent great potential for tourism development in Kosovo. Let us take a trip to Kosovo and explore the country.

I would like to emphasize the following to the people of Kosovo. For Kosovo to be seen as a genuinely mature democracy, the greatest challenge is reconciliation between communities. Prior to the conflict in Kosovo, Kosovar Albanians and Kosovar Serbs lived in the same space. I have a female friend in Kosovo who is Kosovar-Albanian. She was very sad when the conflict broke out. Kosovar Albanians and Kosovar Serbs once lived together, but Kosovar Serbs were forced to flee in the wake of the conflict. The majority of them have not returned. Reconciliation must now be accelerated before the memories of a more harmonious time fade and are lost for good. As long as animosity and injustice remain in Kosovo society, tourists and foreign companies will hesitate to visit or invest. In that regard, Japan highly values the high level of commitment by both sides to resolve issues even after several incidents that heightened tensions. I ask both sides to demonstrate the rich, diverse cultures and societies of Kosovo through efforts to achieve reconciliation and tolerance, including the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo.

In concluding my remarks, I would like to recall three outstanding colleagues from my time as Chief Political Officer in UNMIK 17 years ago: Ms. Nadia Younes, Mr. Jean-Selim Kanaan and Ms. Fiona Watson. Ms Younes was UNMIK spokesperson, and her office was right next to mine. Mr. Kanaan and Ms. Watson were advisers to then Special Representative of the Secretary-General Kouchner. Mr. Kanaan was also my partner on winterization projects in Kosovo. They all worked very hard and contributed greatly to Kosovo's recovery from devastation and chaos. Three years later, a United Nations office was established in post-Saddam Hussein Iraq. Then-Special Representative of the Secretary-General Sérgio Vieira de Mello, keenly aware of the high calibre of the three officers, brought them to Iraq. On 19 August 2003, Mr. De Mello convened a regular senior staff meeting with those three people present. A truck parked beside the building. A strong explosion occurred, turning the building into rubble. The attack killed whoever happened to be at the site, including those persons just mentioned best, the brightest of United Nations personnel. People with talent and bravery like them are tirelessly working at the forefront of peacekeeping missions to bring about peace and justice, at times in dangerous environments. We must never forget the dedication and sacrifice that many brilliant people have made in order to achieve peace.

In the hope that somehow they can hear me, I would like to report to those three great colleagues of mine that, in Kosovo, peace and stability, democracy and economic development have made steady progress.

Mr. Arancibia Fernández (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of Serbia, for his statement. I also thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his briefing on the current situation in Kosovo.

Bolivia calls for the implementation of resolution 1244 (1999), including full respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Serbia. We think that the resolution is the international legal basis for resolving the situation in Kosovo.

In relation to the security situation in Kosovo, we would like to express our concern about the region, in particular the political instability that endangers the lives of minorities. With that in mind, we believe that the parties must be open to ongoing dialogue to reach solutions that promote progress and stability. We therefore welcome attempts by the parties to make progress in the dialogue under the auspices of the European Union in order to arrive at a lasting solution that will put an end to the disputes that affect the region. However, we are concerned that in practice the

parties do not seem able to implement the agreements that are the outcomes of those meetings. We urge the parties to maintain the dialogue through political determination, without it being hindered by the lack of a real commitment to a peaceful settlement.

Bolivia welcomes the agreement on telecommunications that confirms the assignment of a local area code for Kosovo.

We also call on the parties to join forces to help internally displaced persons return to their homes.

We also wish to call attention to the growing number of extremists in the region who support the Islamic State, which is a clear threat. We commend the efforts made to apprehend people associated with those activities. However, since this is an underlying and ongoing problem, we call for regional organizations and all the parties involved to focus on containing this evil, which is afflicting all humankind and is showing itself to be a clear threat to peace and stability of the region. Bolivia condemns terrorism in all its forms, and we believe that it is a duty for all States to combat it and seek its eradication.

The parties are called on to prevent the commission of acts of aggression that undermine the Charter of the United Nations and its embedded principles, in order to work towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Every effort should be made to achieve lasting peace, which in the long run will be beneficial to the region, with the parties primarily resolving their differences through dialogue and negotiation and with the assistance of regional organizations.

Finally, Bolivia takes note of the work of UNMIK.

Mr. Kandeel (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Zahir Tanin, for his comprehensive briefing to the Security Council on the report (S/2017/95/Rev.1) of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). I also welcome Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of Serbia, and Ms. Vlora Çitaku, and thank them both for their briefings.

Egypt welcomes the progress achieved Kosovo in the economic and security spheres, as well as with regard to the rule of law, which will necessarily have a positive impact on peace and security in the region. However, we would also express our concern in connection with what is stated in the report about the increased tensions between Pristina and Belgrade and the diminished commitment to dialogue between the two.

We call on both sides to exercise self-restraint and avoid incitement and unilateral solutions that may lead to escalation. We reiterate that there is no alternative to dialogue as a means of resolving disputes, and therefore urge the leadership in Belgrade and Pristina to revive and reinvigorate the high-level dialogue between them under the auspices of the European Union without delay. That is how we can achieve consensual, fair and sustainable solutions that are acceptable to both sides and that lay the foundations for peace and stability in the region.

Accordingly, Egypt welcomes the efforts aimed at implementing the agreements reached between the two sides in August 2015 under the auspices of the European Union. In that context, we refer to the Secretary-General's report on the progress achieved in some areas, particularly in terms of the integration of the judiciary, freedom of movement, and telecommunications. But we would also like to express our disappointment at the lack of progress in a number of other areas related to those agreements, particularly in relation to the establishment of an association/community of Serbian-majority municipalities in Kosovo, which was one of the critical provisions of the agreements. We would therefore like to reiterate the importance of establishing such a community in order to guarantee institutional protection for the Serbian community in Kosovo.

Egypt's foreign policy is a pillar upholding security and stability in different regions. In that context, we underscore the importance of the Kosovo Parliament adopting the agreement on the border with Montenegro.

In conclusion, we reiterate Egypt's support for the efforts by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, particularly in relation to supporting the authorities in Kosovo in counter-terrorism and allowing them to better address the existing and emerging challenges that threaten security and stability in the region.

Mrs. Gueguen Mohsen (France) (*spoke in French*): I would add my thanks to those expressed by other members of the Security Council to the Special Representative of the Secretary General, Mr. Zahir Tanin, as well as to the President of Serbia,

Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, and to the Ambassador of Kosovo, Ms. Vlora Çitaku.

I should like to begin my statement by recalling once again France's wish to revise the frequency with which the Security Council reviews the situation in Kosovo. Given that the Council is facing an increasingly burdensome workload, there no longer appears to be any justification for maintaining quarterly briefings on the question of Kosovo, whose situation is in no way comparable to crises for which the Council's intensive commitment is crucial.

We believe also that the positive developments we have seen in recent years in Kosovo in terms of strengthening institutions justify our desire to continue to refocus the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and to ensure their coordination with the other international actors present in Kosovo. We call once again on the Secretary-General to make recommendations on this issue in the framework of his next report.

France is convinced that the future of Kosovo can no longer be seen as a priority in the Council, but, rather, within the framework of a political dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, led by the European Union.

It is therefore important in this regard for the parties to demonstrate a proactive commitment at the highest level. We expect that all of the agreements reached will be implemented as swiftly as possible, including as concerns the establishment of a community association of Serb-majority municipalities, which is a key element of the dialogue. We therefore urge the Kosovo and Serbian authorities to step up their efforts, particularly on this latter issue, in order to achieve more concrete outcomes in the months to come. This is an issue that we will follow very closely.

We are deeply concerned about the tensions that we have seen in recent months on the ground as well as by the regrettable provocations that have fuelled them. We expect all actors to show responsibility and restraint. The agreement reached on the demolition of the wall in Mitrovica is in this respect a positive development. The normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina remains, generally speaking, a prerequisite for their progress on the path to European rapprochement, which was once again encouraged at the Paris-Balkans 2016 summit, held on 4 July last.

The efforts under way to strengthen the rule of law in Kosovo must remain a priority and include fighting radicalization in all its forms. We therefore welcome the unconditional commitment of Kosovo in this regard, both locally and within the international coalition against Da'esh.

France will also continue to provide its support to the efforts undertaken by the authorities of Kosovo in favour of international recognition of their State.

Lastly, I would like to conclude my statement by pointing out that the action under way in France against Mr. Ramush Haradinaj is a part of a judicial proceeding initiated on the basis of an arrest warrant issued by INTERPOL. This order was carried out as a matter of routine, in keeping with our international commitments. It does not have a political dimension and does not alter in any way the relation of trust that we traditionally have with Kosovo or our support for reconciliation in the region and the implementation of a dialogue between Belgium and Pristina.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): We express our appreciation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Ambassador Zahir Tanin, for his briefing on the latest situation in Kosovo and the activities of the Mission. I also welcome the presence of His Excellency Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia, at today's meeting and would like to thank him for his statement. I also thank Ambassador Çitaku for her statement.

Since this is the first time that we are speaking on this issue, we would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm our support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia, for the peaceful and amicable resolution of all outstanding issues and for the scrupulous observance and implementation of the Brussels Agreement. We believe that resolution 1244 (1999) remains an important framework for resolving the Kosovo issue through dialogue and negotiation.

We welcome the progress made in the implementation of the agreement reached within the framework of the European Union-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, specifically in the areas of integration of the judiciary, freedom of movement and telecommunication.

However, we also take note of what the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/95/Rev.1) states with

regard to the lack of progress on the establishment of the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo and the delays in the implementation of the agreement on freedom of vehicular movement.

It is important that the parties remain fully committed to implementing the agreement that they have reached through the European Union dialogue process for the sake of promoting lasting peace and stability in Kosovo and the region as well as the building of trust and the normalization of their relations.

The report about the tense political situation between Belgrade and Pristina, on the one hand, and the strained relations between the governing and opposition parties and between parties within the governing coalition in Kosovo is a matter of concern. All parties need to refrain from escalating tension and seek peaceful avenues and dialogue to address any disputes.

We take note of what the Secretary-General stated in paragraph 37 of his report with regard to some leaders who show

> "sincere commitment, courage and the vision of a better future, free of the zero-sum approach that undermines the real interests of the people that they serve".

We believe that this is the kind of spirit that should guide all the parties in addressing difficult and sensitive issues in order to reach a fair compromise.

The growing threats of terrorism and violent extremism have been a recurring theme over the course of this month, including during the debate on conflicts in Europe and the briefing on the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Kosovo and the region are not an exception to this, as highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General. The recruitment of fighters for the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and the arrest of several individuals suspected of planning terrorist attacks, as well as the weapons and explosives seized by the Kosovo authorities, are a clear indication of the seriousness of the threat, which needs to be given particular attention.

Finally, we appreciate the efforts of UNMIK in engaging all the parties and communities to promote security, stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo and the region. We believe that the role of the Mission remains important in addressing current and emerging challenges on the ground. In this regard, we welcome the continued engagement of UNMIK with Belgrade and Pristina as well as the communities in Kosovo and regional and international actors in carrying out its mandate.

Mr. Skau (Sweden). I would like to start by joining others in thanking Special Representative Tanin for his comprehensive briefing to the Council today. I would also like to thank President Nikolić and Ambassador Çitaku for their statements to the Council.

Much progress has been made since the end of the conflict in Kosovo, in June 1999; however, building peaceful and prosperous societies requires constant vigilance and an unwavering commitment by political leaders from both parties as well as from the international community that stands with them. We are therefore concerned over the recent rise in tensions between Kosovo and Serbia, and we call on both sides to redouble their efforts for peace by showing restraint and refraining from inflammatory rhetoric and provocative actions.

The experience of the European Union has shown us that lasting stability can be built through dynamic European Union (EU) integration processes. The peoples of Serbia and Kosovo are looking towards a future, together, within the European Union, rather than to the divisions of the past. The focus of all efforts should be on the normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo within the context of the EU accession process. Therefore, we encourage Pristina and Belgrade to engage constructively in the EU-facilitated dialogue. By realizing their European perspective, Kosovo and Serbia can cement a stable, democratic and prosperous future for their populations. It is essential that the status issue does not hinder Kosovo on its European path or prevent its membership in international organizations. The goal of the Security Council should also be to support the normalization of relations and a smooth transfer of responsibility to the peoples living in Kosovo. In that regard, we are ready to engage in discussions concerning the future of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

We call on all Kosovar politicians from both the Government and the opposition to overcome their disagreements through dialogue and refrain from disruptive behaviour in order to implement the crucial

reforms needed to benefit the people in Kosovo and the wider region.

Sweden is ready to play its part. We look forward to continuing our bilateral development cooperation as well as our political support to Kosovo's progress in the areas of democracy, human rights, the rule of law, gender equality and sustainable and inclusive economic development.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I thank and commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, our friend Ambassador Zahir Tanin, for his excellent presentation of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/95/Rev.1) and reassure him once again of the full support of the Senegalese delegation in his mission. I also welcome the presence of His Excellency Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia, and of Ambassador Vlora Çitaku of Kosovo, and thank them for their statements, which have certainly elucidated our understanding of the situation under review.

Just last week in this very Chamber, we discussed the conflicts that are currently taking place in Europe (see S/PV.7886), which was an occasion for Secretary-General António Guterres to remind us that what are known as frozen conflicts will continue to threaten international peace and security only until they are peacefully and definitively settled. In the opinion of the Senegalese delegation, the Kosovo conflict is emblematic of such conflicts. My delegation is therefore concerned by the recent and persistent tensions cited in the Secretary-General's report, which are somewhat undermining the significant progress that has been made since the end of the conflict by the stakeholders from both sides.

Accordingly, with a view to relaunching a dynamic that will promote building and durably sustaining stability, not only for Kosovo but for the entire Balkan region, the Senegalese delegation strongly encourages, on the one hand, the Kosovar political stakeholders to work to maintaining a peaceful political environment, which largely depends on the quality of the political dialogue with Belgrade; and, on the other hand, the Serbian authorities to maintain and strengthen their commitment in a constructive and calm dialogue with Pristina. In that regard, Senegal welcomes the progress that the two parties have made, in particular within the framework of the dialogue conducted under the auspices of the European Union, and encourages those partners with influence on both sides to continue to use it to promote and guide talks.

In order to consolidate the results that have been achieved in that framework, we believe that the agreements reached to date must be implemented and that the political leaders of both parties must fully commit in a consultative manner to resuming talks. Everyone here has said that that is only path towards resolving the crisis.

The recent developments described in the report of the Secretary-General — in particular the slowness in establishing the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities, the arrest of the former Prime Minister and the current leader of the main opposition party in Kosovo, Mr. Ramush Haradinaj, on 4 Jaunuary in Paris, and the diplomatic incident provoked by trains originating in Serbia — recall the absolute necessity for the Council to continue to support talks at the highest levels within a dynamic of cooperation at the United Nations and subregional organizations.

My delegation believes that those difficulties can be overcome and that they must in no way slow the progress that has been made — it must be noted — such as the assignment of an international dialling code for Kosovo as well as the implementation of the agreement allowing that country to host a special tribunal to investigate crimes committed during the conflict in Kosovo. In that same vein, we welcome the high-level meeting that took place in Brussels on 24 January and was organized by Ms. Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, in which the Presidents of Serbia and Kosovo participated. During that meeting, commitments were made to resume talks under the auspices of the European Union.

The Senegalese delegation agrees with the Secretary-General that we must pursue our efforts in the context of the humanitarian situation and human rights, as Ms. Karima Bennoune, the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, stated following her visit to Serbia and Kosovo in October 2016. We believe that the activities carried out within the framework of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, the mandate of which has been extended to 14 June, are helpful because they contribute to enhancing achievements related to defending and promoting the

rule of law and human rights, as well as the fight against terrorism and organized crime.

Furthermore, the Senegalese delegation welcomes the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo in promoting reconciliation, transitional justice, human rights and support for the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina. In addition to encouraging dialogue, Senegal urges stakeholders to redouble and strengthen confidence-building measures by laying the groundwork for the easing of tensions and development, notably by promoting the implementation of the agreements of 25 August 2015 in northern Kosovo.

The Senegalese delegation therefore reiterates its full support for the joint European Union-United Nations programme aimed at strengthening trust between communities, in particular through the protection of cultural heritage, and calls for the strengthening of cooperation on information sharing with a view to resolving the painful question of missing persons.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China would like to thank Mr. Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing. China welcomes the presence of His Excellency Mr. Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia, and the statement that he made. We also listened attentively to the statement made by Ms. Çitaku.

China respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia and understands its legitimate concerns on the question of Kosovo. China acknowledges the positive efforts of Serbia in the search for a political solution to the question of Kosovo. Resolution 1244 (1999) constitutes the legal foundation for the solution to the question of Kosovo. China supports the efforts of the concerned parties to search for an appropriate solution, acceptable to all, through dialogue and negotiations, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and within the framework of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Currently, the overall situation in Kosovo remains calm. Underlying complex questions, however, remain and defy efforts to finding a solution. China hopes that all parties will continue to search for a political solution, engage in high-level political dialogue, settle their differences through practical and constructive dialogue, implement the agreements reached so far, build upon progress, increase mutual trust and seek rapprochement so that a lasting and appropriate solution can be found gradually to the question of Kosovo.

The achievement of national reconciliation is essential to resolving the Kosovo question. The parties concerned should endeavour to improve the well-being of the people, strengthen protection for the rights and benefits of all communities in Kosovo, refrain from any rhetoric or action that might escalate tensions, and safeguard peace, stability and development in the Balkan region.

The Security Council should continue to follow the question of Kosovo and persist in efforts to find an appropriate solution. China appreciates the work done by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) under the leadership of Special Representative Tanin. China supports the constructive cooperation of UNMIK with all the parties in accordance with its mandate. China hopes that UNMIK, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, and the Kosovo Force will further their coordination and gradually improve the situation in Kosovo, thus playing a constructive role in finally resolving the question.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Ukraine.

I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Zahir Tanin, for his comprehensive briefing on the developments in Kosovo. I would like to reiterate Ukraine's full support to him as he carries out his important functions. I am also grateful to His Excellency Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia, and to Ms. Vlora Çitaku.

We note that throughout the reporting period there have been a series of regrettable events that caused a significant increase in tension. Those tensions are a matter of concern, as they could impede the process of normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina, and negatively affect the lives of all of Kosovo's residents.

Ukraine welcomes the role of the European Union (EU) in diffusing tensions and commends the resumption of high-level meetings between Belgrade and Pristina in Brussels. We call upon the political leaders in Belgrade and Pristina to actively work to avoid provocation, confrontation and an escalation into

conflict. It is important that, in the spirit of restraint and responsibility, they put aside their political abitions and focus on further progress in the implementation of the agreed commitments, which would benefit the people in the region and enhance their European prospects.

We are encouraged by the tangible results in the implementation of the agreements concluded in the framework of the EU-led dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, in particular on freedom of movement, telecommunication and justice. Ukraine looks forward to further progress in the fulfilment of outstanding commitments, including on the establishment of association/community of Serb-majority municipalities.

Ukraine continues to support the important role played by UNMIK, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and the Kosovo Force, in which Ukrainian peacekeepers contribute to preserving peace and stability in Kosovo.

At the same time, like other delegations, we believe that it is time to reconsider the frequency of UNMIK periodic reports. It might be appropriate to adopt a more flexible approach. Resolution 1244 (1999) requests the Secretary-General to report at regular intervals, without specifying how often. We believe the Council could agree to have regular reports twice a year, with the option of spot reports as may be required by the situation on the ground.

Finally, it is also time to review the role of the United Nations in Kosovo, including vis-à-vis its regional presence and possible steps towards its rationalization. We believe that converting UNMIK into a special political mission should be considered as an option, as that would appropriately reflect its current role.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.